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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 4 October 1991, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia)

later: Mr. LEGWAILA (Botswana)
(Vice-President)

- General debate [9] (continued

Statements by

Mr. Sipaseuth (Lao People's Democratic Republic)
Mr. Cheaka (Togo)
Mr. Van Lierop (Vanuatu)
Mr. Kololo (Congo)
Mr. Farah (Djibouti)
Mr. Fonseca (Cape Verde)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. SIPASEUTH (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (spoke in Lao: interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation): On behalf of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. Aware of your broad experience and your profound knowledge of international affairs, I express the hope that this important, forty-sixth, session will be crowned by particular success.

I also take this opportunity to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Guido de Marco on his dynamic leadership of the work of the forty-fifth session and also to Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, Secretary-General of our Organization, on his energetic and tireless efforts to settle regional conflicts and to safeguard international peace and security in this new era of world détente and cooperation.

(Mr. Sipaseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

We extend a warm welcome to the delegations of the new Members of our Organization, namely, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania.

The international situation continues to undergo changes. Generally speaking, a new era of peace and cooperation has begun, and the risks of nuclear confrontation have progressively lessened. The two great Powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, have just concluded a Treaty on the reduction of strategic arms, and, along with the recent proposals made by the United States, this creates conditions favourable to the efforts of the nations and peoples of the world to promote relations of friendship and cooperation in the economic, cultural, scientific and technical areas, on the basis of respect for mutual interests and the principles of peaceful coexistence.

Whilst the overall world situation has been marked by détente and the promotion of international cooperation, many uncertainties persist. The era of confrontation and of the cold war seems to be drawing to an end. The new world political order, which is intended to be just and equitable, does not yet seem to be clearly defined. Recent experience has shown us that peace, independence and the national sovereignty of peoples are far from being guaranteed, and, therefore, there is uncertainty in certain regions and fresh confusion in others. Certainly we want a new world political order - but an order capable of guaranteeing the legitimate interests of peoples. We also want economic cooperation between States, particularly between the developed North and the developing South, but it must be equitable. As for

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multilateralism and the United Nations, we feel that they need to be further strengthened, so as to be able to serve appropriately the legitimate interests and aspirations of the small, as well as the large, countries of the world. In my delegation's opinion, the United Nations should play an important role also in the process of consolidating détente and cooperation and also in safeguarding and strengthening its Charter in order to guarantee the interests of all peoples. In this light, we should engage in consultations in depth so as to make our Organization more democratic and adapt it to the new and changing realities of our world.

As we all know, the efforts to settle world and regional conflicts have yielded some fruitful results, thus helping to promote international peace, security and cooperation. However, many contradictions and conflicts persist in certain regions.

In South Africa, for example, the black population's struggle, under the leadership of the African National Congress, against repression and violence has taken on unprecedented scope, placing the South African authorities on the defensive in every respect and forcing them to negotiate. In spite of certain positive developments, the system of apartheid and its main foundations remain intact. It is incumbent on our Organization to reaffirm its support for the struggle for the total elimination of apartheid and for the establishment of a united, equal society in South Africa in which all the inhabitants, without distinction as to race, will enjoy the same democratic freedoms.

In the Middle East the situation remains disturbing. Israel continues its occupation of the Palestinian territory and other Arab territories. If this conflict is to be resolved, it is essential that the interests of all the countries concerned be taken duly into account. In this regard, we endorse

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the initiative for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), of 22 November 1967, and 338 (1973), of 22 December 1973, and the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, particularly the right to self-determination.

In the Persian Gulf, the crisis that shook the entire region and the world was resolved, but not without difficulties. The State of Kuwait, a full-fledged Member of our Organization, has regained its independence and its territorial integrity. However, many post-war difficulties remain. All the parties concerned must therefore display greater restraint and strive to settle this problem by peaceful means, on the basis of equity and justice.

In Central America the peace process is continuing despite the obstacles which have arisen. The Government and people of Laos express their solidarity with the peoples of that region as they attempt to regain their full sovereignty and independence.

In the Korean peninsula the situation is still a cause for concern. However, the Lao People's Democratic Republic feels reassured by the progress made at recent meetings between high authorities of the two parts of Korea. The admission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to the United Nations is another important step towards the peaceful reunification of Korea in accordance with the aspirations of the entire Korean people.

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In West Asia, the situation is not free from tension. In the Republic of Afghanistan, the bloody civil war continues to rage. We support the wise and realistic five-point initiative of the Secretary-General aimed at settling this conflict. It is high time that all parties concerned express themselves firmly in its favour in order to put an immediate end to the civil war, achieve national harmony and agreement among Afghans and at last restore peace in the region.

In South-East Asia, there has been a general easing of tension. The countries in the region are increasing their contacts and further expanding their relations of cooperation in the economic, trade, cultural, technical and scientific areas. A new era of détente and cooperation has begun there and is now developing to the great benefit and in the interests of the peoples of the entire region. We are pleased by this new propitious and beneficial atmosphere prevailing in the region.

As regards the Cambodian question, a giant step towards an overall political solution has just been taken. The Cambodian parties to the conflict, at their recent meetings at Pattaya in Thailand, at Peking in the People's Republic of China, and at United Nations Headquarters in New York, reached agreement on an unlimited cease-fire, a proportional ballot for voting on the basis of provinces and so on. They are unanimous that His Royal Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk should assume the presidency of the Supreme National Council. The Lao Government and people sincerely welcome these decisions and hope they will provide a further impetus to the effort at achieving reconciliation among Cambodians and making Cambodia an independent, sovereign, peaceful, neutral and non-aligned country having good relations with all countries, in particular its close neighbours.

(Mr. Sipaseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

As for my country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the implementation since 1988 of its policy of renewal has seen the further expansion of its economic, trade, technical and scientific and other relations with the outside world. Within the context of this same policy, we are also carrying out a progressive restructuring of our administration in order to make it more relevant and better able to respond to the realities and new requirements at the national, regional and international levels. Thus several legislative texts - including the penal code; and the laws on labour, nationality, the family, property, inheritance and so on - have been prepared and other draft texts are now being drawn up. Quite recently the first Constitution of the Republic guaranteeing the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Lao people has just been adopted by the Supreme People's Assembly. We sincerely hope that the adoption of this fundamental law will lead to the progressive transformation of our country into a State based on law. In brief, we are now implementing this policy of renewal in all areas, with a view to the progressive enfranchisement of this developing country, the promotion of popular democracy in social life in all its aspects and the guaranteeing of political stablility, order and social well-being. In this spirit, and moved by a burning desire to live in peace, our people will spare no effort to promote friendship with all peoples. It will continue to implement firmly its foreign policy of peace, independence, friendship and cooperation with all countries without distinction as to their political and social regime and on the basis of equality, mutual respect for independence and sovereignty and reciprocal advantage, thus contributing jointly with other peoples to the cause of peace, national independence, democracy and social progress.

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As we all know, during the 1980s the overall growth of developing countries averaged 3 per cent annually, whereas during the 1960s and 1970s it was 5.5 per cent. Judging by these statistics, the last decade was marked by a fall in growth rates, lowered living standards and a rapid increase of poverty. The developing countries have suffered extensively, and the 1980s thus saw the gap between rich and poor countries widening. Such was the very disappointing picture of the results of the past decade. As for the 1990s, major efforts should be made and everything should be done to make this a true development decade. In this light, the developed countries, by reason of their influence in the world economy, should do everything in their power to create a favourable international economic environment, without which the developing countries will quite likely be unable to solve their problems. Faced with serious problems of foreign debt, and given the pronounced deterioration in their terms of trade, the developing countries can make progress and, indeed, prosper only if the world economy's dynamism and stability are restored. The whole world would be more secure and more prosperous if together we could rid it of disease, poverty and hunger - in other words, underdevelopment.

The problem of illicit drug trafficking continues to pose a serious threat to the international community. In the struggle against this scourge the countries of the world - developed and developing - have cooperated in many areas, especially in that of integrated rural development whose goal is to encourage those who cultivate the poppy to choose progressively a substitute crop. In order to make its contribution to this international effort, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has cooperated in many areas with

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friendly countries and international organizations, including the United Nations Programme for International Drug Control, and states that it is ready to continue this cooperation.

The forty-sixth session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when the nations of this world are actively mobilizing in favour of international peace and cooperation. In the face of this new reality, the United Nations has been accorded an increasingly important role in order to contribute effectively to this process and to meet the burning aspirations of the nations and peoples of the world. The States Members of our Organization - large or small, rich or poor - must cooperate with one another in the various areas on the basis of strict respect for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of each State and for the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of others and of reciprocal advantage. In this spirit, the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic assures the Assembly of its full cooperation; it will work in close collaboration with all delegations in order to contribute to the success of this forty-sixth session.

Mr. CHEAKA (Togo) (interpretation from French): The forty-sixth session of the General Assembly has opened at a very special time in the history of the United Nations and of the human race. Forty-six years after this Organization was established an astonishing speeding-up of history is under way. The arms race seems to be ending at last and the cold war is over. Everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe, political liberalization in just a few months has changed the frozen relationships which were undeniable realities over the last 45 years. Africa and Eastern Europe are opening up to freedom and democracy. The pillars of apartheid are now crumbling and Africa is resolved more than ever before to take its place in the international arena.

In other words, Sir, you assume the presidency of the General Assembly under very special circumstances which bring many hopes with them. The delegation of Togo, through me, would like to congratulate you sincerely on your election to the presidency of this forty-sixth session. This wise choice, besides being a tribute to your country for its devotion to peace and justice, is a recognition of your experience in international affairs and of your intellectual and human qualities. I assure you that all the members of my delegation will cooperate with you fully and work with you to ensure the success of your mission.

My delegation would like to say to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Guido de Marco, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Malta, how pleased we were at the effective and able manner in which he presided over the work of the forty-fifth session. We would like to commend him most sincerely once again.

We also wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his efforts on behalf of

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peace and security and for all that he has done to make the United Nations a stronger and more credible Organization, because it is able to defend the rights, the independence and the sovereignty of its Members.

We also welcome - and draw attention to the importance of the growing universality of our Organization - the presence of the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Baltic Republics of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia in the Assembly. Their presence represents an outstanding example of our universality. We are indeed glad to see our family circle growing.

Without question the world is entering a new era. The improvement in the international situation following the disappearance of East-West antagonisms appears to have strengthened the resolve of the international community to promote dialogue and compromise in order to achieve lasting peace and reinforced its commitment in favour of human rights. The end of the cold war should enable us to respond better to the aspirations of the peoples for freedom and democracy, to speed up the process of general and complete disarmament and to seek definitive solutions to regional conflicts which persist and to the major economic and social problems of the world.

The aspirations for freedom and democracy which have supported the upheavals in the Eastern European countries over the last two years have now become widely shared in the world and are the foundation for the better management of national affairs.

The recent spurts of political, economic and social renewal in many African countries have offered us tangible proof of the political maturity of our peoples and have clearly disproved the argument that democracy is the

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preserve of the developed countries and only a luxury for the developing countries. Of course, the transfer from an autocracy that has lasted for many years to democratic management of the State cannot be carried out without difficulty. But the Togolese people, anxious to promote a state of law and using its own resources through their National Sovereign Conference, have now committed themselves to an overall process of democratization which calls for one and all to be involved in order to ensure the primacy of freedom and justice in the management of our affairs.

There is an old saying that "the voice of the people is the voice of God". Time moves on inexorably and the march of our peoples towards democracy is irreversible and their commitment to that path is total. The people of Togo thirst for true democracy and any political option must necessarily take account of the social realities and the deep-seated aspirations of our people if it is to succeed.

The people of Togo recognize the virtues of democracy but they believe that there can be no true democracy unless there is dialogue between the peoples and the leaders, between the base and the summit. They also believe that there can be no prosperity without liberalization of the creative forces of the nation and that there cannot be true democracy unless there is social and economic development based on solidarity that helps everyone.

All of the important resolutions that emerge from our National Conference, however lofty they may be, will be doomed to failure unless the Government has the resources with which to implement them. That is why the people of Togo, through its Government of transition, calls for the support of brotherly and friendly countries and of the international community, as well as of countries devoted to peace, justice and fairness. We would urge all of

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these to follow a policy of cooperation, assistance and solidarity with respect to Togo, in order to help us to establish our youthful democracy on a solid basis of freedom and peace.

The aspirations of peoples for freedom and democracy cannot be realized unless the world is free from the threat of the build-up of weapons of mass destruction and regional conflicts which pose a threat to international peace and security. That is why I am happy to recall that the United Nations Charter has established as its goal the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of international relations and the implementation of cooperation among States. Thus, the sessions of the General Assembly offer us every year an opportunity to see to what extent our conduct is in harmony with the ideals to which we subscribe.

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Indeed, the world is undeniably on the threshold of a new era. The improved international situation, following the world's geopolitical transformation, seems to have strengthened the international community's resolve to consolidate and reinforce its achievements towards lasting peace and the promotion of human rights. This strengthening also requires a search for definitive solutions to conflicts that seem to be dragging on forever and which could jeopardize the progress achieved. The efforts to settle some of these conflicts - in Cambodia, Western Sahara, Mozambique and Angola - are grounds for hope.

On the question of Western Sahara, the Government of Togo hopes that a swift, equitable and definitive solution can be found in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the Organization of African Unity and the recommendations of the United Nations. My country, which fully supports respect for the right of peoples to self-determination, quite rightly welcomes the commendable United Nations efforts that led to the recent establishment of a cease-fire in the Western Sahara. We hope that this ceass-fire will be fully respected by all parties to the conflict. We invite them to do everything possible to facilitate the organization of the long-awaited referendum under the auspices of the United Nations, without delay and in conditions acceptable to all. Togo is proud that it has been chosen to send peace-keeping troops to help organize the referendum on the question of self-determination.

The Government of Togo also welcomes the solutions found to the crises that have brought such sorrow to Angola and Mozambique since they achieved independence. We hope that the parties to these disputes will respect the agreements that have been signed and seize this historic opportunity to set

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out on the path towards national reconciliation.

On the question of Liberia, the Government of Togo would hope that concord, harmony and national reconciliation can finally be restored in that brotherly country. Despite some progress, much remains to be done to strengthen peace. But we remain optimistic. The movement towards a final settlement of this fratricidal conflict has been strengthened following the meetings in Lomé, Bamako and Yamoussokro. Our country will pursue its work along those lines, hoping to see the parties arrive at solutions that will guarantee to the people of Liberia peace, reconciliation and national reconstruction following free and democratic elections.

Togo welcomes the recent positive developments in the dispute between Mauritania and Senegal. As in the past, my country is willing to continue efforts, together with the States of our subregion, towards a lasting and equitable solution to this distressing dispute between two brotherly countries.

On the question of South Africa, everything seems to suggest that we are at the dawn of a new era of hope, but apartheid is still alive. Of course, some positive initiatives have been taken by the South African authorities, such as the repeal of the Land Acts and the laws on separate housing. Nevertheless, there remain many obstacles on the path to salvation that the Pretoria authorities must overcome at any cost if there is to be a democratic system and the establishment of a state of law in South Africa before the sanctions are removed in their entirety.

The Middle East remains the most insecure part of the world despite the end of the Gulf war. That is why my Government is following with interest the negotiations now under way with a view to convening a conference bringing together all parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization. We

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appreciate the efforts made, inter alia, by the United States of America, to ensure lasting peace in that part of the world.

On the Arab/Persian Gulf, my Governments invites Iraq and Kuwait to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions, to respect all parts of those resolutions, and to create favourable conditions for the normalization of intergovernmental relations in the region.

As to Lebanon, for many years the theatre of political and intercommunal strife, we are glad to see civil peace and national harmony restored in that country, which has suffered so much from so many years of war. We deeply hope that that State will finally be liberated of all foreign occupation.

The Cambodian question continues to hold our attention. Togo, a peace- and freedom-loving country, welcomed the convening, from 24 to 26 June 1991 in Pattaya, of a meeting that led to the unanimous election of His Royal Highness Prince Samdech Norodom Sihanouk as Chairman of the Supreme National Council. That election, inspired by a spirit of national compromise and reconciliation, certainly provides a stimulus to the peace and reunification process under way. Recent agreements between the parties to that conflict, as well as the United Nations peace proposals, should, we hope, restore peace to that friendly country.

On the question of Afghanistan, it is indeed deplorable that, following the departure of foreign troops from the country, the situation has not yet improved in any tangible way. We invite the various parties, in all freedom and without outside interference, to commit themselves to talks aimed at a peaceful, negotiated solution to the problem of Afghanistan with a view to safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In Central America, Togo supports and commends the many efforts of the

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United Nations towards the restoration and strengthening of peace. We urge the Secretary-General to pursue his efforts and to take any action necessary for a definitive solution to the crises in El Salvador and Guatemela.

As to Europe, and more particularly Yugoslavia, a non-aligned State, my country regrets the intransigence of the parties to that conflict, which threatens to become an international one if common sense does not win out over narrow egoism and nationalism. We do appreciate all of the efforts made by the international community and by the Europe of the Twelve with a view to putting an end to the atrocities. These are internal affairs, it will be claimed, but faced with the scope of the crisis we would invite the hostile brothers of Yugoslavia to lay down their arms immediately and unconditionally with a view to a negotiated political solution.

The Togolese delegation welcomes the continuation and indeed strengthening of the disarmament movement, which has been consolidated and enriched in the last five years by the signing of many agreements on arms reduction - for example, the agreement on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe in 1990 and, more recently, in July 1991, the signing in Moscow of the START agreement on the limitation and reduction of strategic weapons, following intensive bilateral negotiations between the two super-Powers. Here we would also welcome and commend the most recent specific proposals for the destruction and reduction of offensive weapons made by United States President George Bush, which will certainly accelerate the disarmament process at the international level. For Togo, general and complete disarmament is an imperative. In that regard, the other countries involved must also commit themselves to the progressive reduction of armed forces and traditional conventional weapons, which are as lethal as they are devastating, with a view

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to the conclusion of many other international instruments towards that end. What is at stake is the peace, security and happiness of the human race as a whole.

On the threshold of the third millennium, we are happy to see the end of the cold war. Compromise, dialogue and cooperation seem to be gaining ground over confrontation. The current state of relations between the nations of the world augurs a world of tomorrow that will be more stable, with political systems in which freedom and human dignity will be respected.

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However, while numerous recent events prompt optimism, others are indeed sources of concern and distress. For world stability is not based exclusively on an improvement in international political relations. It is also, and indeed primarily, based on establishing conditions that could generate and equitably distribute economic prosperity in the world. The end of the cold war, or rather, the shift from distrust and confrontation between East and West towards dialogue, compromise and partnership, should encourage the progressive elimination of those many disparities in international economic cooperation and a resumption of the North-South dialogue.

In order to be effective and lasting, political détente must also involve economic détente. This means that the disappearance of political and ideological antagonisms and economic rapprochement between the countries of East and West must not be to the detriment of the developing world. This also assumes a reorientation of international economic relations towards a genuine commonality of interests that could lead to progressive and total integration of the Eastern countries and of the developing countries into the world economy.

As for the lessons to be learned or, rather, the disappointments and failures of the 1980s, a period generally considered a decade that was lost to development for the poor countries, the following challenges should urgently be taken up:

First, we must break the vicious circle of the massive and growing external indebtedness of the poor countries and of the continuing deterioration in the terms of trade by instituting vigorous measures to ensure short-term economic recovery and long-term growth;

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Secondly, protectionist tendencies must be reversed by creating an open and equitable trading system within the context of multilateral trade negotiations (Uruguay Round);

Thirdly, efforts towards diversification and modernization of the least developed countries should be supported, and the financial flows to those countries should be substantially increased.

It is also important scrupulously to ensure the implementation of decisions on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council in close cooperation with the specialized agencies of the United Nations. In any case, the new breath of life brought to international economic cooperation must be based on the strict implementation of recommendations adopted by the international community following international economic meetings. They include: the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation adopted at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly; the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade; the Plan of Action of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries; and the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.

The developing countries are fully aware of their paramount responsibility for their economic and social development. Indicative of this awareness are the initiatives at various levels to promote and strengthen South-South cooperation and to make it complement North-South cooperation. To this end we concluded the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community at the Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held at Abuja, Nigeria, from 3 to 6 June 1991, which is in keeping with the Lagos Plan of Action providing for the economic, social and cultural integration of Africa.

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It is also within the context of strengthening South-South cooperation that we should look at the wise and realistic recommendations in the report of the South Commission, submitted to the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva last July. Those recommendations emphasize the paramount responsibility of the South for its own development and stress the human dimension of development and the urgent need for the poorer countries to strengthen their collective autonomy and their unity of action. The positive assessment by many developed countries and multilateral institutions of the report of the South Commission must be accompanied by specific commitments to encourage implementation of the recommendations in that report.

We must also draw attention to the disturbing situation of African debt and the fragility of our economies. The overall African debt is large and will continue to grow. It could exceed $550 billion by the year 2000 despite efforts by African countries for economic recovery. Some creditor countries have shown a certain awareness of this increasingly disturbing state of affairs. Measures have been taken to reduce the debt of the developing countries. We welcome the efforts made by some rich countries towards easing the debt burden, and hope that much will be done to help the third world in this regard. However, the debt forgiveness agreed by the industrialized countries is still inadequate to rescue the poor countries from this serious crisis.

The international community must also deal with the crucial issue of rapid environmental degradation. These changes will have serious economic and social consequences for present and future generations. Special consideration should thus be given to air and water pollution, the ozone layer, soil depletion and desertification. International cooperation for environmental

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protection requires a global approach, taking account of all aspects of the question, without ignoring the development priorities of the developing countries. In this regard, the developing countries should participate actively in the work of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Effective international measures must be taken to prevent the dumping of toxic wastes in the territories of other countries.

The challenges facing us to make our world a safer, more peaceful and more prosperous one are many and complex, but I think members will agree that the world has made progress in its search for solutions. For this progress to be lasting and irreversible, it is essential to strengthen our faith in the Organization and its principles. Nothing lasting has ever been achieved and nothing lasting can be built in conditions of insecurity, disorder and chaos.

International peace and security can be achieved, not through distrust, but rather through dialogue and understanding between peoples, which generate equitably shared prosperity. It is only then that we will be able to dream of a world where our only concern will be to cherish peace and safeguard moral values based on respect for human dignity and to share the joy of general prosperity.

Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vanuatu): Mr. President, we congratulate you on your election to preside over the General Assembly at this forty-sixth session. Your diplomatic skills and experience are well known, as is your commitment to the principles and ideals of the United Nations. We look forward to a productive session under your capable leadership and congratulate the Government and people of Saudi Arabia as well.

We also congratulate Sir Michael Somare, the Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea; Mr. George Iacovou, the Foreign Minister of Cyprus; and Mr. Abdalla Saleh Al-Ashtal, the Permanent Representative of Yemen. Each has made his own unique contributions to world peace and understanding. Each has dignified and contributed to the strengthening of the international democratic process here at the United Nations.

We also congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Guido de Marco, the Foreign Minister of Malta. He proved to be well suited to the task of guiding our deliberations in this new era in international relations.

We join in commending the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar. He and other members of the Secretariat have laboured tirelessly on behalf of the international community in its search for justice and peace. It is therefore fitting and symbolic that near the end of the Secretary-General's tenure, seven new Members should be admitted to membership in the world body.

The simultaneous admission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea bodes well for the future of the Korean people and enhances the prospects for lasting peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. The restoration of the sovereignty of the Baltic Republics, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, closes a sad chapter in human history, and offers new hope to others who await the restoration of their own sovereignty.

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The admission of our Pacific neighbours, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, further attests to the universality of the United Nations and to the continued relevancy of the international community's focus on Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories. We congratulate all seven of the new Members. More importantly, we congratulate the United Nations on what each of these seven new Members symbolizes, and on the qualities each brings to the Organization.

On occasion, human history moves faster than the hands of those who would write that history. So much has transpired in recent months that the scribes of history have barely had time to allow the ink to dry before having to turn the page and begin anew. In some instances the scribes have not even had time to turn the page.

After a brief visit to Haiti, democracy has once again been "exiled" by those who have continually brutalized the people of that impoverished country. Only a few days after he stood at this very podium and articulated his people's plea for justice, Haiti's President and the dream of his people were driven into exile. However, it is our belief that this will be a short "exile" and that Haiti's people will soon restore their democracy and claim their future. We wonder how those who have assaulted Haiti's democracy expect to succeed in the face of the new expectations of Haiti's people and the broad international support which exists for that country's legitimately elected President.

Also freshly inscribed on the pages of history are a number of positive developments. Among them, are Guatemala's recognition of Belize and the establishment of diplomatic relations between these two Central American neighbours. The broad agreement between the President of El Salvador and the

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five leaders of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front is another very positive development. This agreement could lead to a truce in that country's long civil war and eventually help bring economic and social justice to that country's beleaguered people.*

Cambodia has also taken a huge step towards securing a brighter future for its people. The Supreme National Council of Cambodia has taken several initiatives that could lead to an era of peace and national reconciliation. The permanent members of the Security Council and the Paris International Conference on Cambodia have contributed significantly to this process. Hopefully, the Secretary-General's five-point plan on Afghanistan will inspire the parties to that conflict similarly to negotiate a framework for a comprehensive political settlement.

The ink of history is not yet dry on other parts of the globe either. One year ago the United Nations was justifiably preoccupied with an effort to re-write history by turning the pages of history back to the era of "might makes right". Fortunately the international community rose to the occasion and Kuwait is now free of foreign occupation. However, the people of that region, particularly those of Kuwait and Iraq, paid a terrible price. Our hearts go out to them. Others also paid a terrible price. Our hearts go out to them as well.

As important a step as the liberation of Kuwait was, it will lose its moral and legal significance unless the international community consistently applies the same principles everywhere. We must always judge the act and not the actor. Should we fail to do so, we can rightfully be accused of having a double standard.

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* Mr. Legwaila (Botswana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

Principles which are selectively applied are not really principles but are instead mere expedients. Therefore the United Nations should act in a comprehensive and consistent manner in circumstances similar to those which existed in Kuwait one year ago. Had the international community been consistent prior to the invasion of Kuwait, it is doubtful whether that invasion and the death and destruction it brought about would have occurred.

Years of inaction and the lack of resolve on the issue of Palestine and the occupied Arab territories are examples of the inconsistency that does little to enhance respect for the rule of law. The deafening silence on the question of East Timor by some who spoke so eloquently on the invasion of Kuwait is, to a country as small and vulnerable as Vanuatu, another frightening reminder of the inconsistency exhibited by some members of the international community.

The recent initiative taken towards the convening of an international conference on the Middle East enjoys broad support and may set in motion a process of negotiations that will lead to a comprehensive political settlement. We certainly hope such a chapter of history will soon be written.

With respect to East Timor, we are pleased that a delegation of Portuguese parliamentarians is about to make a visit to the Territory. We hope this visit will contribute to a settlement which will eventually allow East Timor's people to decide their own fate and write their own history.

We are encouraged by the prospect that Western Sahara's people will soon determine their own destiny and write their own page in the history of the United Nations. Equally encouraging is the positive and peaceful atmosphere that now exists in Lebanon.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

The decolonization process, particularly that under way in New Caledonia, continues to be a major concern of the countries of our region. The positive measures taken by France to assure tranquillity in the Territory and to promote the economic and social development of its colonized people are much appreciated. What will be even more appreciated will be the moment New Caledonia gains its independence and joins the community of nations, as did two neighbouring Pacific Island countries at this session of the General Assembly. That will certainly be a joyous moment of history.

Democratic winds of change are also sweeping across Africa, from North to South and East to West. While much of the attention of the international news media has been focused on Eastern Europe, Africa has also witnessed important new historic developments. The guns have fallen silent in Angola, where a full-scale military conflict has given way to what will, hopefully, be a purely peaceful political contest. Liberia may still be troubled but, hopefully, it has now turned the corner and will soon leave its most difficult days behind, as will Ethiopia and a number of other African countries whose peoples have endured more than their share of hardship and suffering.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

The institutional structure of apartheid continues to dissolve in the face of continued resistance by South Africa's people. The end of legalized apartheid will by no means end the problems of that country. Economic, political and social inequality are so deeply ingrained that it will take decades of concerted effort to remove the vestiges of the apartheid system. Hopefully, the international community will not abandon South Africa's people merely because those who currently govern that country now find themselves compelled to offer a series of reforms. Events are moving very fast in South Africa. New history is being written every day. However, as in other parts of the world, the past cannot be ignored in shaping the future.

With the danger of ideological conflict having receded in some parts of the world, there has been a tragic reversion to an older and more frightening type of conflict. On more than one occasion, the world has been warned of the dangers of intercommunal conflict and ethnic strife. For far too long those words of warning fell on deaf ears. Some insisted that this issue was strictly an internal affair of various countries. Others insisted that this was too sensitive an issue to discuss at international forums.

While fully respecting national sovereignty and recognizing the domestic dimensions of intercommunal conflict and ethnic strife, we often wondered what it would take to make some members of the international community aware of the serious threat posed to all nations by such conflict and strife. Unfortunately, we now have the answer.

One need not single out any particular country or any particular region. Intercommunal conflict and ethnic strife are problems which plague the entire human race in every corner of the globe. No human being should ever be judged, or assigned a particular status, because of his or her race, religion,

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

language or culture. When hatred of this sort runs rampant, none of us is immune to the consequences.

Large countries and small countries can be victims of this hatred. Developed countries and developing countries can equally be victims. This hatred can be witnessed in parts of the world that are geographically remote from where we now sit. It can also be witnessed within a short distance of this very building.

One can examine our agenda and identify certain long-standing items that, in part, originated as intercommunal conflict or ethnic strife. History will indeed judge us harshly should we fail to address this issue and assert moral leadership on it, thus bequeathing our failure to future generations. It would certainly be ironic for history to record that the current generation dismantled physical walls or barriers but left standing other types of walls. Unfortunately, the latter type of barrier - that of ignorance, intolerance and ethnic hatred - is far more difficult to breach.

The rapidity with which history occasionally moves was recently illustrated in dramatic fashion. One week ago the President of the United States announced a sweeping initiative which could for ever alter what had, since the dawn of the atomic age, been accepted as the normal rules of arms control. The announcement that the United States would unilaterally eliminate its land-based short-range nuclear weapons, withdraw its tactical nuclear arms from its ships, take its strategic bombers off alert, and cancel the development of the mobile MX missile represents another benchmark in the evolving relationship between the world's two foremost nuclear Powers. An equally dramatic response from Moscow is anticipated in the next few days.

One might legitimately wonder whether recent political events and

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

technological developments had already made some of these weapons obsolete or superfluous. One might also ponder the costs and environmental consequences of eliminating these frightening weapons. None the less, President Bush's announcement just might give new impetus to efforts to rid the world of the threat posed by all types of nuclear weapons.

This initiative leads us to ask, once again, why nuclear weapons are being tested in the South Pacific despite the repeated objections of the countries of the region. The testing of these weapons in the South Pacific was always opposed on safety, moral and environmental grounds. Today there is even less reason to understand the need for these tests. There are even more compelling reasons for our repeated appeals for their end to finally be heeded.

The international political climate is not the only climate that is changing. The climate that determines the sustainability of life on this planet and the level of social and economic development achievable by human beings is also changing. This latter climate change has been occurring since the dawn of the industrial era, although at a somewhat slower, less perceptible pace than changes in the political climate. None the less, its impact will undoubtedly be greater than the impact of any political changes known to mankind.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change is currently engaged in what could be considered the most important multilateral negotiations ever. The outcome of these negotiations might, in the long run, determine whether human life can continue to be sustained on this planet. The negotiations might also shape the manner in which mankind's economic activities are conducted. It is difficult to imagine more important subject-matter.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

Every country in the world is participating in these negotiations. It is hoped that the negotiations will be successfully concluded in time for the convention to be opened for signature at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro in June of 1992.

All countries have a great deal at stake in the negotiations leading up to the Conference. Environmental issues and economic issues are interrelated and of equal importance. Small, island developing countries and low-lying coastal countries have another concern - survival. These are the countries most vulnerable to sea-level rise caused by global warming. As such, they are likely to be the first victims should the international community fail to agree on a collective response to mankind's most severe challenge.

Much remains to be done to ensure the successful completion of the negotiations for a climate-change convention. Even more remains to be done to ensure that the UNCED is meaningful and successful. Hopefully, the United Nations system and Member States will spare no effort in providing adequate support to ensure the success of these parallel processes. We shudder to think of the consequences of our failure to do so.

Much of the change taking place in the world today revolves around principles of democracy and the commitment to democratic ideals. Democracy and democratic ideals are not constants which once planted can be ignored or left to their own devices. Democracy and democratic ideals are, rather, like a garden in need of constant care and attention. They must be fed and nurtured or they can wither and die, or even be overgrown by weeds disguised as flowers. We know of no instance in history in which democracy was very easily established. Instead, the establishment of democracy took considerable effort and years of turmoil and unrest in even the oldest of democracies. It

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

will take similar effort in today's evolving democracies. No nation in the world has a perfect democracy. No nation in the world has a monopoly on democratic ideals. Certainly, no nation has a history which allows it to lecture others on the subject or hold itself up as a perfect model to be emulated in every respect.

From time to time, democracy and a nation's adherence to democratic ideals are tested. This is as true of nations as large and powerful as the Soviet Union or the United States as it is of nations as small and removed from the centres of power as Vanuatu. We believe that eventually, in all such instances, democracy will triumph. History instructs us that people everywhere, and the evolution of the human experience, will accept nothing less.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

The United Nations is today the highest form of international democracy. It is not yet a perfect international democracy. Its imperfections and shortcomings are known to all. What are sometimes forgotten, however, are its very positive attributes and its many accomplishments. In the history of mankind, there has never been any international or intergovernmental organization as democratic or as successful as the United Nations.

Thus, as we undertake the work of the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, and take one additional step towards the twenty-first century, let us feed and nurture our garden of international democracy. Let us reflect upon and recommit ourselves to the democratic ideals which have brought us together in search of justice, equality and peace.

In a symbolic sense, our seven new Members have entered the Organization at the right moment in history. They can be an important new source of energy and nutrition for our garden of international democracy.

In conclusion, we recall the moving words of a Mozambican poet written 20 years ago during his country's struggle to free itself from colonialism. Although those words were written at a different time, in a different place, and under circumstances different from those which exist today, they still bear a certain symbolic relevancy to mankind's mutual undertakings of today.

We hope these words can be understood and appreciated in that context. They are simple words of compassion for fellow human beings. In their simplicity, they reveal many truths:

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

"So many paths we have trodden already!
So many people we have greeted
liberated
clothed
fed
taught

Along our march!
So many plains, mountains, rivers we have crossed!
It is still far the day of independence,
but each passing day it is nearer. ...

We advance-instruments of an ideal
loftier than ourselves
Released from our former solitude.

Sometimes we pause by the wayside
Attracted by a child who hails us,
a chance-born flower,
a certain smile,
a distant star.
We pause within ourselves: our steps continue
and we meet again further on.
We cannot be late. There, the enemy
continues to enslave our people ...

To arms Comrades!"

Mr. KOLOLO (Congo) (interpretation from French): It is a pleasure for me to speak for the first time from the rostrum of the United Nations as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Government of National Union and Transition, which arose out of the Sovereign National Conference. I thus bear an historic responsibility to inform the international community of the conclusions of this great gathering of the vital forces of our nation.

I should like first to say how pleased I am personally, and on behalf of my delegation, to convey to Mr. Shihabi of Saudi Arabia our warm congratulations on his outstanding election to the presidency of the General Assembly of the United Nations at its forty-sixth session. By bestowing on him unanimously the weighty mission of guiding its work, the General Assembly wished to pay a tribute to his country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with which the Republic of the Congo, my country, maintains friendly relations.

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

His election is also proof of the recognition by the Assembly of his outstanding qualitites as a statesman and diplomat whose talent and experience provoke the admiration of all and augur well for the outcome of our work.

To his predecessor, Mr. Guido de Marco, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta, we should like to express our thanks and gratitude for the wisdom, competence and effectiveness with which he presided over the meetings of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The Congo, which was part of the General Committee of the General Assembly at that time, was able from that privileged position to appreciate his remarkably fresh approach to the activities of the Organization, particularly with regard to its laborious reform process.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, I should like to reiterate our constant support and encouragement for his tireless efforts for peace. We welcome his dynamic work at the head of the Organization, which today has seen restored its prestige, validity and credibility, which lie at the basis of great works.

With the admission of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the Baltic Republics of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia to membership of our Organization, the role of the United Nations in international affairs has been further strengthened. We welcome with joy and pride this event which is a new and striking illustration of the irreversible march of the United Nations towards its goal of universality.

The work of the forty-sixth session is taking place at a further decisive turning-point for the Organization. There is no more eloquent argument in this respect than the successful mobilization over the past few years of collective action for the settlement of certain disputes which have long been

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

deadlocked and which have been placed before the United Nations. This refurbished image is the result of the disappearance of cold-war antagonisms and the bipolarization of international relations - a bipolarization which had immobilized the United Nations for four decades.

The adoption of a settlement plan for the Iran-Iraq conflict and, among other successes, the settlement of the complex question of Namibia and the simultaneous withdrawal of foreign troops from Namibia and Angola, have made it possible for the United Nations to be considered as an actor worthy of confidence on the international scene.

There is general agreement that progress has also been made as regards the situations in Afghanistan, Cambodia, El Salvador and Western Sahara. The functioning and ability of the Organization, moreover, have been crucial in the process that put an end to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. However, we could not fail to note that the outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf showed that the Security Council authorized coercive action, not as provided for in Article 42 and succeeding Articles of Chapter VII of the Charter, but on the basis of an international coalition.

The fact remains that, with the involvement of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations determined a favourable outcome of this war. The central role it was destined to play by the founding fathers regarding international peace and security has thus been brought to the forefront.

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

The world, already more than a year into the last decade of the twentieth century, is caught up in a turmoil of spectacular upheavals unforeseen by mankind, despite its fertile imagination.

The international community lived through 50 years of certainty, when order reigned in Eastern Europe, but six years of perestroika have upset the balance. This happened first in the Soviet Union, where many citizens gradually shed their fear and rediscovered the courage to discuss and criticize, and also to display renewed nationalist outbursts or to have dreams of identifying their peoples with Western development models.

This new Soviet revolution spread to Eastern Europe, awakening the profound and legitimate aspirations to freedom of many peoples long bundled up together under the Communist regime. Democracy and human rights have been progressively affirmed wherever authoritarianism, dictatorship, a one-party political system and arbitrariness once stifled fundamental freedoms.

Members will not be surprised to hear me state a bold opinion about the democratic wind that is blowing through Africa and in particular the Republic of the Congo. It is true that some of the changes that have occured, which have established dialogue and democratic debate in many African States, remain dependent on international pressures and the major international financial institutions, both as investors and bilateral partners. However, we should not underestimate internal factors and conditions.

International opinion is aware of the special mechanism in Africa of the national conference, which has made it possible to implement, with variations for each country and each people, the general outline of the democratic process flourishing elsewhere. My country, the Republic of the Congo, is part of the great movement that is today sweeping Africa, Asia and Central America;

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

it held its own sovereign National Conference, a fraternal forum, lasting 105 days, attended by 1,200 representatives of all the nation's driving forces and people of good will. The Conference was held in Brazzaville from 25 February to 10 June this year, in the presence of foreign observers.

There was a democratic debate, with contributions by political parties born of political liberalization, professional associations, organizations of young people and women, scientific societies, religious groups, former Heads of State and other national notables - in brief, the vital forces of the Congolese nation, moved by their common destiny, in a national upsurge. That debate was complete and decisive, but typical of the African type of debate, which combines the virtue of dialogue with the wisdom of compromise.

Having taken stock in all areas, the National Conference, in full sovereignty, concluded that administration by the one-party political system had failed, and it adopted a fundamental law which constitutes a provisional Constitution for the Republic for a transitional period of 12 months.

The fundamental law provides for a tripartite division of constitutional powers, in the Congolese style of coexistence. The President of the Republic, who represents the nation, is the Head of State. But his powers have been reduced. In particular, the President of the Republic exercises the diplomatic competences of the State.

The Prime Minister, Head of Government, is elected by the National Conference. This is a first in our political history. His position is also strengthened by devolution to him of the important functions of Head of the Armed Forces.

With regard to legislative aspects, a Higher Council of the Republic has been set up, with power to follow up the decisions of the National Conference.

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

The Higher Council of the Republic can overturn the Government by passing a motion of censure. The powers of the judiciary, independent of the executive and the legislature, rests with the Supreme Court and other national courts, under the control of the High Council of the Judiciary. It should also be noted that we have established a High Court of Justice, which will pass judgement if any crimes and offences are committed by members of the Higher Council of the Republic and members of the transitional Government. The President of the Republic can be brought before that body if accused of high treason.

The National Conference also produced a number of national charters of rights; it adopted a charter of rights and freedoms guaranteeing each citizen the right to material well-being and offering a legal framework for his moral and spiritual development.

Moreover, we had the foresight to include in the fundamental law a provision concerning civil disobedience in the event of any individual or group of individuals seizing power by force. The latest political developments in the Soviet Union and Haiti confirm that we were right to look ahead in that way. We also agreed on a charter of national unity. That was the first step we had to take. The most difficult phase, that of implementing those rights, has only just begun.

The range of significant measures taken by the sovereign National Conference includes a timetable for elections, which will begin in November this year with the holding of a constitutional referendum and end with presidential elections next June, the proposed end of the transitional period. Local and parliamentary elections are scheduled for January to March next year. Implementing this timetable will lay the foundations for democratic life in the Congo.

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

I must again draw the Assembly's attention to two types of measures taken by my country's National Conference, which some observers emphasized was the longest exercise of its kind in Africa.

First, we are preserving the symbols of the Republic. The Conference readopted the first symbols used at the time of the Congo's proclamation of independence in Brazzaville in 1960. That makes it possible for us to revive the dream of building a fraternal Congolese nation, united in working for economic and social progress. Thus the People's Republic of the Congo, my country, has again become the Republic of the Congo.

The national emblem is the rectangular tricolour flag - green, yellow and red. The national anthem is "La Congolaise", and the Republic's motto has again become "Unity, work, progress".

National independence, peace, friendship and good-neighbourliness, as well as respect for the principles of non-alignment, remain the foundations of the foreign policy of the Republic of the Congo. We base ourselves on these principles in order to establish links of cooperation with all the nations of the world that love peace and are working in harmony with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Those principles guide the humanitarian action of the Republic of the Congo, a land of peace and hospitality, which, despite its economic and financial difficulties, has done everything possible, in cooperation with other countries, to facilitate the repatriation to their countries of origin of many foreign nationals following recent events in our subregion.

The success of that operation was made possible by the climate of peace that reigns in my country and the political maturity of our people who, following the sovereign National Conference understand, thanks to the process

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

of democratization under way, the need for peoples that love democracy and freedom to support each other. I should like to take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to give its support to the young democracies of Africa - for man cannot live by democracy alone; he must also have bread, clothing and housing.

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

While it is certainly true that to have bread one must first have freedom, democracy is not the end of the process of social and economic development. This is one of the most urgent problems of international cooperation. While it is indisputable that democracy is a point of departure and a sine qua non for development, it cannot take root and flourish in an environment of mass poverty where persistent economic degradation and social decay suggest to some that the African continent is doomed to a certain destiny.

The economic and financial crisis that my country is going through was at the centre of the concerns of the national sovereign Conference. Consideration of the economic agenda led to the conclusion, inter alia, that over the last few years there has been a marked deterioration in the budgetary situation, exacerbated by the debt-servicing burden, which has become unbearable. This is the heritage bequeathed to us by one-party management - an economy bled dry. Thus it has been decided to assign to the transition Government the task of drawing up and implementing a programme of stabilization and economic recovery, within which an improvement in public finance and a restructuring of the economy and of the banking system are priority objectives.

The implementation of the reforms that have been advocated, whose social cost can already be measured, calls for commitment on our part, and their application calls for perseverence. However, in an international economic environment tilting towards depression, and, above all, without external support, particularly the support of the international community, our efforts alone cannot bear the fruits that we hope for. It should be stressed that the political liberalization that is under way in my country quite naturally calls for the adoption of a similar policy of economic liberalization.

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

The Government of Transition and National Unity of the Congo intends to revive private initiative through incentive measures, such as the adoption of a new code of investment to promote the development of the private sector at the national and international levels, as well as foreign investment. Indeed, we have chosen liberalization and privatization as elements in the process of relaunching our economy - notably through private investment, to the advantagement of small and medium-sized industries, agriculture, trade and crafts.

Concern in Africa is merely a reflection of the economic and social crisis affecting all developing countries. The scope of indebtedness, which has become stifling, continues to hamper all efforts at economic recovery, and these are further inhibited by net negative financial flows. So far as the African countries are concerned, the holding of an international conference on African external debt deserves greater interest on the part of the international community. Moreover, my country is very concerned about the persistence of the combined effects of the deterioration in terms of trade and the constant fall in export earnings caused by unprecedented fluctuations in the prices of commodities on which the African economies in particular depend. This is why we are placing all our hopes in a rapid and favourable outcome to the negotiations of the Uruguay Round with a view to achieving an open, multinational trade system that is more just and more equitable.

From the viewpoint of interdependence, I am convinced that we should envisage a solution to this crisis, which is raging in most of the developing countries. The General Assembly's Declaration on International Economic Cooperation - in particular on the recovery of growth and development in developing countries, together with the International Development Strategy -

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

offers, in this respect, an ideal framework for cooperation. Moreover, South-South cooperation - an indispensable complement - should decisively direct developing countries towards collective autonomy aimed at reducing the marginalization of their economies, which is perpetuated by an unfair world economic order. The establishment of an African common market meets this concern and is also a necessity, for it is certain that the coming decades will mark a new era of cooperation based on relations between the great subregional economic groups.

The position that the question of the environment now occupies on the international agenda is an expression of the international community's growing awareness of the risks resulting from degradation of our natural surroundings. Today there is agreement that the depletion of the ozone layer, global warming and climate changes are disasters. Likewise, deforestation, the erosion of arable land, pollution of water and of the atmosphere and impoverishment of flora and fauna are helping to disrupt the balance of ecosystems. In this respect, management of the environment remains a priority question demanding that States act and cooperate closely. Our economic policies must ensure long-term management of the resources of our planet and safeguard the interests of present and future generations.

Placing great hopes in strengthened multilateral action, and taking into account the interdependence between environment and development and the integration of ecological considerations into national economic programmes and policies, the Congo has provided itself with an additional law on the environment - No. 03/91 of 23 April 1991 - which proposes that the requirements for development and for the protection of the environment be

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

reconciled. It envisages the establishment of a fund for the protection and preservation of fauna and flora and of marine and river resources against installations that are dangerous and constitute a health hazard, and for management and development of urbanism.

We hope that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which is to take place in Brazil in June 1992, will be a major event and will make the future of mankind more secure. We hope that the outcome will be favourable and that the Conference will make it possible for us to establish real development contracts - and not simply through assistance - between North and South, so that the ecological balance of the planet may be preserved.

My country is pleased at the positive political changes in South Africa, where the legal foundations of apartheid have finally been abolished. The repeal of these legal pillars of apartheid, together with the other measures that have followed, seems, finally, to have involved this country in an irreversible process. However, it would be premature to ease international pressure so long as no real qualitative change has been secured and so long as a non-racial, united and democratic society has not been established.

As for the Middle East, my country is convinced that the situation in this sensitive region of the world requires a comprehensive settlement. Thus we attach particular importance to the inclusion of the Palestinians in any process aimed at establishing a lasting peace between Israelis and Arabs. That is why my country supports the idea - initiated by the United States Government - of a conference on peace in the Middle East. We invite the international community to work along these lines in order that a definitive settlement of this question may be achieved.

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

As regards arms control and disarmament, the Congo welcomed with profound satisfaction the progress made with the signing, in November last year, of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the signing, in July this year, of the Soviet-American agreement on the reduction, by 30 per cent, of strategic arsenals. We hope that this tangible progress will be substantially expanded, with a view to maintaining and strengthening global agreements relating to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, missiles and other armaments.

We should like to express our pleasure at the measures in this context announced recently by the President of the United States. These measures have met with a favourable response throughout the world, particularly among the great nuclear Powers, and thus the trend towards halting the arms race - a symbol of the cold war - has been strengthened. We feel that the time has come to use the peace dividends for development. However, we must see to it that the progress that has been achieved does not promote the expansion of trade in other kinds of weapons, which create misfortune for countries in the third world.

(Mr. Kololo, Congo)

The United Nations is now confirmed as the universal instrument of peace and international cooperation. We assess that universal dimension not only in terms of the increased number of Member States but also in terms of the vitality and effectiveness with which it defends the values, principles and purposes it is universally recognized as holding. But the Organization must adapt to the rapid changes that are transforming the world so as to meet the challenges of the final decade of the twentieth century as we turn to those of the next millenium.

The restored climate of peace and dialogue undoubtedly inspires hope about the future of international relations. Let us hope that this new era, devoted to world peace, will first and foremost engender conditions favouring sound, fraternal international cooperation based on mutual assistance and solidarity.

Mr. FARAH (Djibouti) (interpretation from French): I wish first of all, on behalf of my delegation and speaking personally, to convey to Ambassador Samir S. Shihabi my sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. Our joy is matched by our great pride at seeing him presiding over this important session, which is taking place at a time when both the cold war and the Gulf War have ended. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Djibouti not only are Arab nations with friendly relations, but also share the same world vision. It goes without saying that Ambassador Shihabi's vast experience, diplomatic skill and just view of international problems make him a true leader who can guide us through a constructive and productive session.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

I take this opportunity to convey to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Guido de Marco, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta, our appreciation for the outstanding statesmanlike qualities he displayed during his tenure.

As the term of Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar draws to an end, it gives me great pleasure to pay him a sincere and respectful tribute for having succeeded with such talent in his difficult international mission. His tolerance, his tenacity, his discretion and his modesty deserve our admiration. He has earned our respect and gratitude with his mediation in ending the Iran-Iraq conflict and in calming hotbeds of tension such as Afghanistan, Western Sahara and, most recently, Central America. Despite serious obstacles, he has always worked to find lasting solutions to numerous thorny conflicts while seeking at the same time to make the international community aware of omissions and inadequacies in development programmes.

We are happy also to welcome the admission of new Members to the great United Nations family. The historic changes on the international political scene no doubt made a large contribution to the admission of those countries. Our warmest congratulations go to the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Last year at this time Iraq's rash and destructive adventure, the invasion of Kuwait, was in the forefront of international politics. A sovereign State had been the victim of the unbridled ambition of a more powerful neighbour. The Iraqi invasion flouted the fundamental principle of non-aggression. The sad consequences of that aggression are felt in Kuwait no

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

less than in Iraq: there has been major material destruction and enormous loss of life, and millions have become refugees. This remains a destabilizing element in that region.

We warmly and sincerely congratulate the Emir and the Government of Kuwait, whose legitimacy and sovereignty have been restored.

With the disastrous experience of the Gulf War, it has become increasingly urgent that we redefine the role of the United Nations in the search for solutions to conflicts. To formulate a more just system of international security to maintain international peace and stability, the United Nations must give serious thought to a regional system of collective security, to conciliation and mediation and to ways of ensuring that the system survives. To that end, there must be multilateral diplomacy to settle the old economic and political problems. If necessary, the Organization must take preventive diplomatic action. To attain its lofty purposes, the United Nations must reflect on the concept and implementation of a global peace process in line with the Charter purposes: "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and "to maintain international peace and security".

During the last four decades the world has been subjected to super-Power rivalry in a fierce cold war. The collapse of communism and the end of its totalitarian ideology offer new opportunities to reduce tensions and promote democracy, human rights and individual freedoms.

We are genuinely pleased to see the beginnings of an era of mutual trust among States. The arms-reduction Treaty signed in July by the two super-Powers and the proposals recently announced by United States President Bush, and the Soviet response to those proposals, are leading towards reductions in weapons of mass destruction, thus making a meaningful contribution to the cause of international peace and security.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

But we must follow carefully events in the Soviet Union. Recognition of the sovereignty of the Baltic States and declarations of independence by other States presage the disintegration of the old Soviet empire.

The Horn of Africa is a region that suffers from chronic drought and famine. Today it is ravaged by ethnic and civil conflicts. In that part of the continent 10 million people each day are hungry.

Recent events in Ethiopia and in Somalia have created tens of thousands of new refugees in the region. The Republic of Djibouti alone provides refuge to 85,000, which is an enormous number given the size of our population.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

Despite its limited resources, Djibouti is doing its best to help those refugees, but they are more and more becoming a burden for a country whose socio-economic structures are already sorely tried. While keeping our borders open to populations at risk, we are still trying to find lasting political solutions to the problems of our neighbours. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General, who has made several urgent appeals to the international community to help those countries that are afflicted by the double scourge of constant drought and civil war.

To put an end to all of this suffering - at least the suffering caused by man - it is essential to demonstrate political will. An authoritarian and bloodthirsty regime which encouraged tribal rivalry plunged Somalia into chaos and called into question its very existence. As The Economist stated recently on the subject of Somalia, "the Government, if we take Government to mean a stable bureaucracy and a state of law, no longer exists". The tribal division inherited from the Siad Barré government, economic collapse, anarchy and the spectre of famine, are haunting Somali society today. To all of these tragic elements can be added the fact that the northern part of Somalia is threatening to secede, thus jeopardizing the country's unity.

Faithful to our policy of conciliation and respect for human life, our President, El Hadj Gouled Hassan Aptidon, appealed to all the movements and factions involved in the war to come and meet in Djibouti. After a preparatory conference, six of those movements participated in a second conference held in Djibouti from 15 to 22 July. Observers from 30 countries and international organizations took part in the conference. The peace agreement signed at Djibouti is at present the only viable framework for the restoration of peace, national reconciliation and the establishment of a democratic process.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

The collapse of the old totalitarian regime should give all Somalis - whether from the north or the south - an opportunity to rebuild the country on new bases, thus responding to the true aspirations of the Somali people.

As to the form the future State of Somalia should take, it is up to the Somalis to find the political and institutional framework that suits them best - unity or a friendly separation. Caution must be exercised since the decision could have serious consequences. We voice the hope that the feeling of belonging to the same community will emerge strengthened from this trial.

We wish to see peace established, not only for humanitarian and fraternal reasons, but also because of the objective realities. The stability and economic development of Djibouti are very closely linked to stability and peace in the region.

The tragic situation in Somalia leads us to believe that international action, similar to that undertaken by the Security Council to put an end to the fighting in Yugoslavia, would be desirable so that the nation of Somalia does not disappear completely.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that a transitional government of national union has now been formed in Somalia. The new prime minister expects to address the General Assembly at this session.

We must also mention the sacrifices made by the people of Djibouti for the brotherly people of Somalia during the regime of Siad Barré and also since the fall of that regime.

The peace process in the Middle East, which was blocked for a long time because of Israeli intransigence, seems to be taking off again thanks to the far-reaching changes in the international political situation and the tireless efforts of the United States Secretary of State, Mr. James Baker, who has been remarkably persevering in the face of Israeli obstinacy.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

After the cease-fire in the Gulf War, President Bush promised to create new opportunities for peace and stability in the Middle East. On 6 March 1991, he told Congress that his commitment to peace in the Middle East would not stop at liberating Kuwait. President Bush confirmed his attachment to global peace based on the principle of "land for peace", a guarantee of the security of Israel and a guarantee of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

All of these hopes simply collapsed because of the demands made by Israel, which wishes to establish and control the schedule or timetable for any talks. It also wants to impose arbitrary and restrictive conditions in order to prevent any legitimate representation of the Palestinian people in general, and of the population of East Jerusalem in particular.

Israel must accept the principle of land for peace. It must recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to create their own State.

The international community must shoulder its responsibilities and deal with the settlement policy in the occupied Arab territories.

Not so long ago, we were all asking if De Klerk would be the instrument for change that South Africa needed, and today we are witnessing irreversible changes, in particular, the complete dismantling of the apartheid system. We pay a tribute to the courage of two outstanding individuals, Nelson Mandela and Frederik de Klerk, without whom this would not have been possible. However, although significant, the initiatives of De Klerk do not quite measure up to the hopes of the black majority. The draft constitution proposed by the National Party on 4 September 1991 contains many positive elements although some of the provisions seem intended to prevent the black majority from actually exercising power.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

Under the De Klerk proposal, 30 million black Africans would have the right to vote, but a white minority would have a right of veto on major political decisions. The creation of a collective presidency and council of ministers seems designed simply to prevent the rules of the majority from operating and, apparently, seeks to preserve the privileges of the white minority.

We believe that the proposal can serve as a basis for negotiations which will lead to the establishment of a democratic and non-racial State; and the peace plan approved by the two main black movements will, we trust, put an end to the violence between rival factions and establish some kind of trust.

May I add how enthusiastic I am about the peace process initiated by the United Nations with a view to a political settlement of the conflicts in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Western Sahara. The search for lasting solutions will, of course, meet with many obstacles, but we are confident and encouraged by the good will that has been shown by the various parties with a view to achieving genuine reconciliation.

Africa is suffering from stagnation and unending poverty. Most countries lack the institutions and the resources necessary to have any significant impact on efforts to reduce poverty. As one African stated: "Everywhere in Africa you sirply see death and devastation." All of the economic indicators - growth, world trade, direct investment and industrial development - are falling while debt and the population are continuing to increase. We must not forget the human suffering that is not shown in these figures. This suffering is aggravated by general instability and the civil wars which are raging in various parts of Africa.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

Our continent needs significant external aid to try to reduce poverty, wretchedness and famine. We are aware of the need for structural reform so that we can move to a market economy and we are also in favour of the political reforms that are needed. We want to have governments that are responsible to their peoples and able to meet their wishes.

(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

With the emergence of a positive international climate, Africa's claims must be considered. Africa is seeking its place here in the United Nations. It has tirelessly served the cause of peace and has sought to promote the ideals of the United Nations with devotion, and yet there has never been an African Secretary-General of the United Nations since it was founded. Now a new world order is being established on the basis of greater justice and equality, and we would express the hope that an African candidate may become Secretary-General.

Another issue of concern to my delegation is the environment. The developing countries are even more likely to see their environment deteriorate because they are threatened by the double challenge of poverty and population pressures. Lasting economic growth cannot be conceived of if the environment is not protected, for the developing countries are dependent on their natural resources, such as the earth, the water and the forests. Those countries therefore need significant outside financing in order effectively to protect the environment. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, will make it possible for us to reach international agreements enabling us to protect our common future.

Before concluding, I should like to reaffirm the devotion of the Republic of Djibouti to the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We have a vital interest in peace and in respect for human rights. These principles also underlie my country's foreign policy, based on wisdom and pragmatism.

Mr. FONSECA (Cape Verde) (spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation): We take great pleasure in participating in this session of the General Assembly under the wise presidency of Ambassador Shihabi. His election to this high post is a tribute to his country, Saudi Arabia, for the enhanced role it has been playing in international relations, and is at the same time public recognition of his personal and professional qualities as an experienced and accomplished diplomat. We wish him every success in the accomplishment of his mandate and we pledge to him all our cooperation as he discharges his difficult but also noble task.

To his predecessor, Mr. Guido de Marco, we express our appreciation for the dedicated and competent manner in which he led the work of the forty-fifth session.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, on the successes registered in various fields and on his personal commitment to helping find peaceful solutions for international conflicts. Under his leadership the United Nations, after many years of stagnation, has had a productive period in pursuance of its purposes and in the implementation of its principles.

We warmly welcome the admission as new Members of the Organization of the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, as well as the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. The admission of these seven countries is an important event in international politics which contributes towards the consolidation of the ideal of universality of the United Nations and is the result of the profound political changes that the world has undergone over recent years.

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

We are witnessing the dawn of a new era in the life of peoples and in the relations among nations. The world is undergoing profound national changes and adjustments, whose final results will, we hope, be the redefinition of international relations, this time based upon mutual respect, the freedom and self-determination of peoples, respect for the democratic ideal and human rights, and economic cooperation between States. A new international order seems to be taking shape and consolidating after decades of political frustrations and uncertainties inherited from the Second World War.

The relations among States have been in the past, and in large measure still are, very much influenced by the pressure exerted by some countries over others, by the policies of spheres of influence, by violations of fundamental norms governing relations among nations and by economic disparity between the North and the South, which have given rise to enormous poverty and left a sizeable area of the planet economically underdeveloped.

On the other hand, at the national level, the history of the peoples has recorded painful episodes of flagrant violations of fundamental human rights, political repression and the denial of liberty to the citizens. The new world order, which is talked about so much nowadays and which I am sure most of us would like to see taking hold, should be based upon different premises and pursue objectives that more adequately meet the requirements and the humanism of our time.

The ongoing political changes in the world are most encouraging. The upsurge in the affirmation of the right of self-determination and independence of peoples in countries that not long ago felt powerless to assert their will and give expression to their freedom, as well as the desire for democracy expressed throughout the world, seems to foretell the emergence of this new world.

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

Today more than ever before, democracy is sought after by the peoples of the world, whatever their developmental status, cultural background or history. The indomitable desire for freedom and aspirations to democracy are today shared throughout the world.

In the countries of Eastern Europe, the monolithic power structure which for decades suppressed the legitimate aspirations of their citizens is now falling apart, in the face of the deep desire for freedom and the expressed will of the peoples to take their destinies into their own hands.

In Africa the peoples are becoming restless and reacting against the economic and social backwardness in which they find themselves as a result of, among other factors, negative policies implemented over the years. All over the continent the peoples are clearly demonstrating their willingness to shoulder the responsibility for their destinies, to express their political aspirations in freedom, to redefine their objectives and to rethink their political organizations on the basis of the values of pluralism and respect for the dignity of the human being.

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

The recent political changes that took place in Cape Verde are to be viewed within the context of the current social movement for profound political changes in Africa and are part and parcel of the expression of the same desire for liberty and the fruit of the same aspiration of all peoples for real democracy.

Through free and fair democratic elections that reflected the aspirations of its people, Cape Verde has today a government that operates within the confines of democratic institutions and with strict respect for the freedom and political rights of all citizens.

The democratic process taking place in Cape Verde is, because of its seriousness, a valuable contribution to the global effort of democratization and respect for the liberty and fundamental rights of all human beings.

With the establishment of a democratic society, we believe we have created the conditions that will allow the Cape Verdean people to engage freely and enthusiastically in the building of a better and more just future for itself.

We witness in many countries a climate conducive to human rights violations. Although we all preach adherence to international norms and proclaim the need to protect human rights, the fact of the matter is that we still live in a world where arbitrary imprisonment, torture and the denial of the most fundamental human rights predominate. Every day in various corners of the world there are people who suffer and die at the hands of those who, to preserve the political status quo, disregard the most elementary rights of the citizens.

Unfortunately, the violation of human rights seems to be a universal plague. In countries where a monolithic structure of power predominates, the

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

violation of human rights is normally rooted in a need to preserve political power. In some countries that receive migrant workers - although most of the time governed by democratic regimes - one witnesses violations of human rights on the basis of the discrimination to which those migrant workers fall victim. In some countries with diverse cultural and ethnic groups, violations of human rights are also translated into the denial of rights to the ethnic or cultural minorities.

Any violation of human rights, whether to attain certain political goals or pursue some economic objectives or based on cultural, ethnic or other considerations, should be condemned outright by the United Nations.

We believe that the United Nations should be more active in the search for a solution of these and other weak areas of our international activity in the protection of human rights. The existing United Nations mechanisms and the current applicable legal instruments deserve a more focused attention on the part of all those who are serious about the protection of human rights as a major endeavour on the United Nations agenda in today's world.

The need for better mechanisms and for more efficient United Nations action in these fields becomes evident in situations of civil war where systematic, gross and generalized violations of human rights assume alarming proportions.

Lately we have witnessed all sorts of crimes against the populations of certain countries torn by civil war, from arbitrary imprisonment to indiscriminate killing. What is even more alarming is that the United Nations witnesses all these crimes, incapable of taking measures to save lives or protect the defenceless population.

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

Existing United Nations mechanisms are ineffective in coping with such situations. Although the principle of sovereignty of countries is sacred to all of us and one that we staunchly defend, we believe that sovereignty should be seen as a shield to protect the people and not as an instrument, a weapon to be used against their basic rights or to annihilate them.

We believe that the conditions should be created in the United Nations to respond effectively to these unfortunate situations in order to protect defenceless populations and shield them from atrocities. In this context we share the ideas expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization.

On the other hand, violations of the rights of minorities are also a source of concern for us. Cape Verde is a country with a homogenous population without any significant cultural or ethnic minorities. We none the less remain sensitive to acts of discrimination against minorities and to any violation of their rights.

We believe that no group, however large, has the right to preach: nor should it have the arrogance to impose less favourable treatment on another group, however small it might be. Every individual, by virtue of his own human nature, is endowed with the same rights and deserving of equal protection irrespective of his birthplace, skin colour, economic condition, ethnic background or political or religious convictions. Here again the United Nations needs to strengthen its existing mechanisms with a view to providing effective protection for minorities.

We hope that the World Conference on Human Rights, scheduled to take place in 1993 in Berlin under the auspices of the United Nations, will help find an answer to these problems.

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

If today democracy seems to be part of our common culture and respect for the protection of human rights deserves the support of all countries, then economic development should equally be a major concern to us all. Democracy and the protection of human rights do not by themselves warrant the much-needed political stability of nations. Democracy and human rights alone cannot ensure the well-being and happiness of peoples and are certainly not a substitute for economic development. Certainly, democracy and the protection of human rights are indispensable conditions for creating a favourable climate for development, but development that is in and of itself an important factor ir consolidating democracy also requires human and material resources and a policy aimed at creating a prosperous and wealthy society.

The developing countries have long struggled to create better living conditions for their populations. Many of these countries seem to have lost the struggle owing to various negative factors, among them a negative economic climate, notwithstanding enormous efforts undertaken.

We believe it to be in the interest of the international community that development problems be seen and solved as global problems affecting all of us.

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

There cannot be any doubt today that the poverty of peoples has a direct impact on the environmental conditions which have a negative repercussion on the quality of our lives. On the other hand, underdevelopment and the poverty it generates are a constant source of political and social instability, whose negative impact on the world economy is evident.

We have come to a stage in international affairs where everything seems to depend on everything else. We believe that now that there seems to be a more realistic approach towards dealing with international issues, we should take advantage of this unique historical opportunity to face economic problems that for long have been crippling the political stability and the social fabric of developing nations.

The idea of a new world order requires serious consideration of the economic problems which have plunged millions upon millions of human beings into misery, which have kept the majority of countries in a constant state of political instability, and which have been a negative factor in the process of democratization.

Here again, we share the view expressed by the Secretary-General that perhaps the time has come to reactivate the process of global negotiations. The reactivation of global negotiations is an issue as momentous as the fact that the poverty affecting a sizeable portion of the world's populations and the underdevelopment of many countries also have harmful consequences - more obvious today than ever before - on the environment.

The neglect of the environment over the centuries and the uncontrolled economic exploitation during past decades have had catastrophic results throughout the world. The danger to the environment that we face today is well documented: rain that does not fall, land that becomes desert,

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

forests that disappear, species that become extinct, the ozone layer that is depleted, and a host of other environmental problems. These environmental problems require prompt global solutions. The issue of the environment, perhaps more than any other on the international agenda, is a clear example of the necessity to tackle collectively all the global problems we face today.

If we want to find adequate cures for environmental ailments - and we shall have to find them, for what is at stake is our own survival - we should, at the same time, endeavour to solve the economic problems, a main factor in the degradation of the environment. The dangers to the environment have been identified and there is a deep awareness of the necessity to protect the environment. Solutions that are required to correct the mistakes of the past are within our reach. Political courage is, however, necessary to ensure the means and the resources to solve the environmental problems.

The Conference on Environment and Development, to take place in Brazil in 1992, will give us a unique opportunity seriously to evaluate the environmental situation with a view to finding realistic solutions. Cape Verde, a country seriously affected by drought and desertification, attaches the greatest importance to this Conference. The United Nations will have an opportunity there to play an important role in establishing world policies to protect our common environment.

The United Nations is becoming increasingly important in a world where global problems can be only solved through collective decisions. International peace and security depends today more than ever before on collective actions by the United Nations. We rejoice in its increasingly active role in the preservation of the peace and security of nations, particularly the small nations.

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

In this context, it gives us particular satisfaction to see Kuwait today restored as a sovereign and independent country, in all its dignity. We hope that events like this one, which profoundly shook the world, will never again take place. The Gulf crisis once again emphasized the fundamental and central role of the United Nations as the only guarantor of the sovereignty and independence of nations, as well as the imperative necessity for countries to respect the principle of the non-use of force in their international relations and to observe, at all costs, the United Nations principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The security of Cape Verde, as a small country, as well as that of many other countries Members of the Organization, depends on respect for, and the increased assertiveness of, international law. For us, strict observance of the Charter principles and norms is of particular significance in creating and preserving a stable world.

In this framework, we feel duty-bound to remind all countries here represented of the untold suffering still being inflicted upon the East Timorese people, whose right of self-determination has been blatantly denied, in flagrant violation of the principles and norms of decolonization. We think it is high time that all peace-loving countries really committed to defending the Charter principles supported the East Timorese people's right of self-determination, with a view to putting an end to the colonial and illegal occupation of this Territory, in accordance with United Nations precepts. We believe that renewed efforts should be made to that end. In this regard, it is our view that countries that bear a special responsibility in the United Nations should play a pivotal role in helping find a United Nations solution

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

for the East Timor situation. It will be difficult, especially in the context of a new world order, for these countries to convince the world that they are serious about ensuring that the principles and norms of the Charter are respected and upheld by all nations if they themselves turn a blind eye to the colonial situation of East Timor.

On the other hand, we are glad to note that a peaceful mechanism has been found for the Western Sahara question. We maintain that the framework for the solution of this question is the one defined in the United Nations peace plan. We believe that for the plan to be fully implemented, as envisaged, the parties concerned should cooperate with the Secretary-General and honour their commitments as well as the results of the referendum, with all its implications.

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

The new world that seems to be unfolding before us should be guided by the philosophy of respect for the principles and norms of international law and by the recognition of the role of the United Nations, first and foremost the Security Council, in the settlement of international conflicts.

After the confrontational era that characterized decades of cold war and the ideological warfare that thwarted the important United Nations function of maintaining peace and security, the Security Council is today in a favourable position to become an effective collective instrument to ensure respect for international legality and impose observance of the principles and norms which govern peaceful and harmonious relations among States.

It is evident that today no single country, however developed and whatever its military might, can alone solve the problems that affect all nations. It has become clear that global problems require global responses that can only be found within and through the collective action of the United Nations.

In order to respond promptly and adequately to these and other international needs, the United Nations will have to adapt to the requirements of today's world. This adaptation will call for some concrete reforms in the Organization and its Charter. The need for United Nations reform has already led to some administrative and financial adjustments in its structure and more recently in the functioning of the Economic and Social Council. The increased hope that the peoples of the world seem to place in the United Nations as a forum to solve important problems affecting the world might also require adjustments in its political organs and institutions.

We believe, however, that any United Nations reform should be oriented not towards creating new spheres of influence or ascribing special powers and privileges to certain countries, but should be guided by the objectives of a

(Mr. Fonseca, Cape Verde)

new world order based on justice amongst nations, the sovereign equality of all countries, the equal participation of all members in international decisions on collective issues, the protection of States against aggression, and international economic cooperation.

The last decades of this century have spawned many dangerous and complex events - conflicts between States; catastrophic economic situations that have condemned many generations to misery; abuses of and crimes against human rights; political agitation; and permanent world tension under the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

It is satisfying to note today, however, that the last years of the last decade initiated a totally new climate of political détente in the world and brewed a number of political events whose positive effects on the relationship between nations gave a new dimension to the activity of this Organization and made possible political cooperation between the two major Powers. These developments augur well for our common future, which we hope will be more peaceful and devoted to cooperation between countries.

The international situation unfolding before us seems to announce a new era in our collective endeavours, an era governed by values to be universally observed, such as respect for the political aspirations and self-determination of peoples; collective measures to protect the environment; universal respect for fundamental human rights; increased international economic cooperation; and respect for international law and United Nations decisions. Only a new international order that promotes those values can ensure our collective survival.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.